

maintain, but not degrade, the Grassy Bald need to be identified. The open pasture areas at Rich Mountain Gap should be maintained in an open condition to maintain habitats for rare high-elevation animal species. Forested areas require little active management and should be managed for older growth and to permit natural disturbance.

The site is in need of formal protection, especially given the advance of development along U.S. Highway 421 from Boone. At present, Rich Mountain Road (SR 1300) (which crosses Rich Mountain Gap), is too poorly maintained to quickly attract development, but development pressure will increase rapidly when it is paved.

NATURAL COMMUNITIES: Northern Hardwood Forest (Typic Subtype and Beech Gap Subtype), Boulderfield Forest, High Elevation Red Oak Forest, Grassy Bald, High Elevation Rocky Summit, High Elevation Seep.

RARE PLANTS: Bent avens (*Geum geniculatum*), spreading avens (*Geum radiatum*), Roan Mountain bluet (*Houstonia montana*), tall larkspur (*Delphinium exaltatum*), Schweinitz's ragwort (*Packera schweinitziana*), mountain bittercress (*Cardamine clematitis*), wretched sedge (*Carex misera*), Gray's lily (*Lilium grayi*), wood lily (*Lilium philadelphicum* var. *philadelphicum*), Appalachian fir-clubmoss (*Huperzia appalachiana*), American speedwell (*Veronica americana*), trailing wolfsbane (*Aconitum reclinatum*), meehania (*Meehania cordata*), golden tundra-moss (*Rhytidium rugosum*).

RARE ANIMALS: Vesper sparrow (*Pooecetes gramineus*), Appalachian cottontail (*Sylvilagus obscurus*).

REFERENCES:

Oakley, S.C. 1998. Site Survey Report: Rich Mountain Bald and Rich Mountain Gap, a part of the Potato Hill/Rich Mountain Bald ecological site. N.C. Natural Heritage Program, DPR, DENR, Raleigh.